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ABSTRACT

Noting that after-school programs are a critical link to helping children become successful adults, this kit explains what after-school programs can and should do for young people and how to locate or start an after-school program. The kit provides a rationale for developing after-school programs, noting the number of children with parents working outside the home and the number of children left to care for themselves while parents are working. The kit summarizes benefits of after-school programs related to school attendance, drug use, teen pregnancy, and conflict resolution and social skills. Characteristics of quality after-school programs are delineated. Characteristics of 5- to 10-year-olds, 10- to 14-year-olds, and 14- to 18-year-olds are also delineated, as are recommended after-school offerings. The kit provides suggestions for finding an after-school program in the community and includes a checklist of characteristics to look for in an after-school program. Organizational and Web site resources for developing and funding an after-school program are listed. The kit concludes with findings from a national poll indicating that over 90 percent of Americans--parents and nonparents--believe that after-school programs should be available to all youth. (KB)

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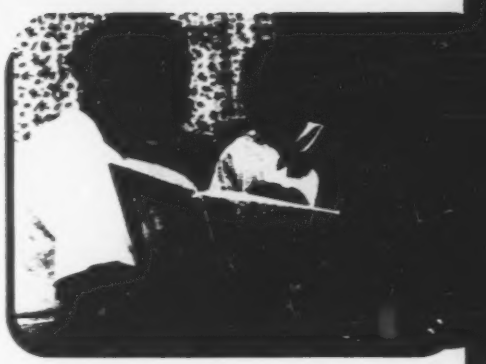

As our children step into the year 2000 and beyond, we owe it to them to provide safe, enriching, fun and exciting places to spend their hours after school. Afterschool programs are a critical link to helping our kids become successful adults. We're delighted that you have joined us on this journey.

Whether you are a parent, a guardian, a grandparent, an educator, a community or business leader or a student — you can become a vital part of afterschool programs.

This Kit explains what afterschool programs can and should do for young people and how to locate or even start one. Our hope is that, after reading through this Kit, you will be as excited about the possibilities available through afterschool as we are.

The Afterschool Action Kit was created with support from JCPenney as part of its commitment to the Afterschool Alliance, an emerging coalition of public, private and nonprofit entities dedicated to raising awareness and expanding resources for afterschool programs. For more information about afterschool programs call 1-800-USA-LEARN. For more copies of this Kit call 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

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Why Afterschool Programs Are Critical

- Although 28 million children have parents who work outside the home, many of these children do not have access to affordable, quality care during the hours before and after school.[1]
- As many as 15 million children are left unsupervised during non-school hours.[2]
- 35% of twelve-year-olds are left by themselves regularly while their parents are at work.[3]
- Juvenile crime triples when the school bell rings at the end of the day.[4]
- Students in afterschool programs show better achievement in math, reading, and other subjects.[5]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE *Sources on back*

Sources

Why Afterschool Programs Are Critical

[1] *1997 Annual Average Figures from the Current Population Survey*, U.S. Department of Labor.

[2] *The National Study of Before- and After-School Programs*, Seppanen, et al., 1993.

[3] *After-School Crime or After-School Programs: Tuning in the Prime Time for Violent Juvenile Crime and Implications for National Policy*, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 1997.

[4] *After-School Crime or After-School Programs: Tuning in the Prime Time for Violent Juvenile Crime and Implications for National Policy*, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 1997.

[5] Jill Posner and Deborah Lowe Vandell, "Low-Income Children's After-School Care: Are There Beneficial Effects of After-School Programs?" *Child Development*, 1994.

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Afterschool Programs Are Safe and Smart

Afterschool programs keep our children safe and give them supervised, structured activity. Many offer activities related to computers and technology; art, drama and music; community service; and reinforcement of basic skills. But these programs can do so much more.

Studies show that children in afterschool programs:

- Are two times less likely to use drugs and one-third less likely to become teen parents.
- Have improved school attendance and do their homework more often and better.
- Learn to respect people different than themselves and develop better conflict resolution and social skills.

Given what afterschool programs can do for youth, and our nation's focus on the needs of children, you might think that afterschool programs exist in every community. They don't. Afterschool programs exist in only about 30 percent of U.S. schools, K-8. Many community organizations like the YMCA and the Boys & Girls Clubs — and increasingly, school-community partnerships — offer programs to fill the gap in service. However, demand still exceeds supply, especially in rural areas.

Our children deserve better.

Additional Benefits of Afterschool:

- **Afterschool programs can improve children's grades and attitudes about learning because they can work on difficult subjects in a more relaxed atmosphere.**
- **Afterschool programs give kids an opportunity to make new friends and build relationships with caring mentors and adults.**
- **Afterschool programs lessen the worries of parents who cannot be with their children after school.**
- **Afterschool programs can involve entire communities in the enrichment of children, and can encourage families to become more effective partners in their children's education and development.**

Baltimore's Police Athletic League (PAL) opened up afterschool activity centers in the city's recreation centers from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. Today there are more than 27 centers that serve as safe places for neighborhood kids. Crime involving youth has dropped markedly in neighborhoods where the centers are located.

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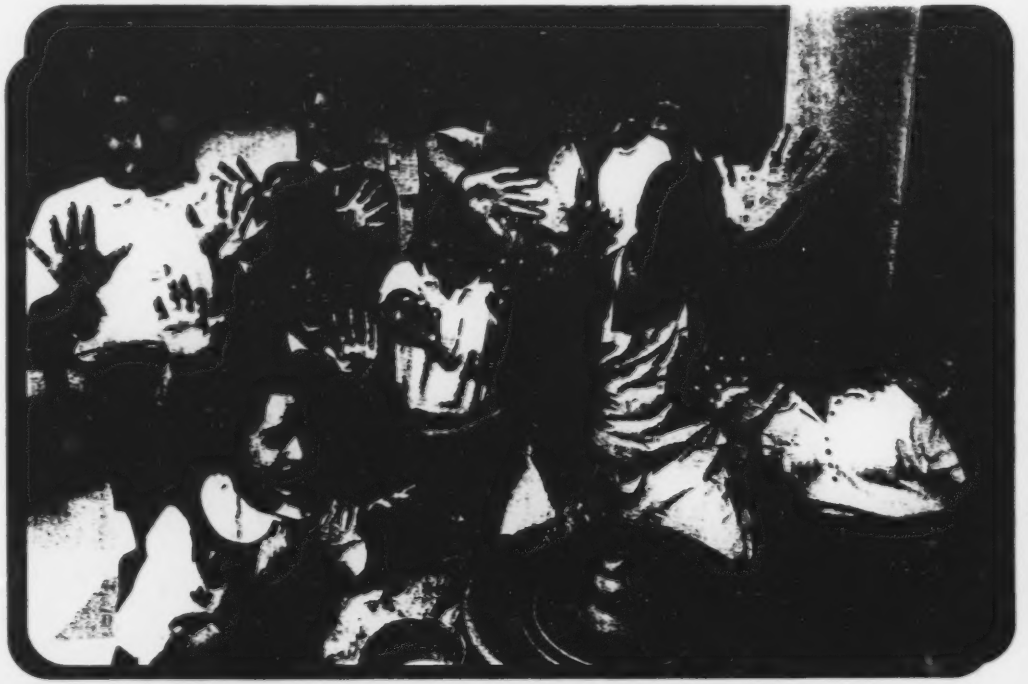
What Does a Quality Afterschool Program Look Like?

Not all afterschool programs look the same. In fact almost anything is possible. Whether you are looking for a good program or trying to start one yourself, explore all the possibilities.

- Allow yourself to dream through a child's eyes. What does a child want after school? Choices? Fun? New and challenging experiences? Independence?
- Consider afterschool through a parent's eyes. What do parents want afterschool to do for their kids? Expand and enrich lessons learned at school and experiences at home? Encourage parental involvement? Build self-confidence? Teach respect for others?
- Ask what your community wants for its children. What does research tell us that children need to grow into caring and responsible adults? What do youth in the community need? What issues are children and youth struggling with and how can afterschool programs support them? How can afterschool build on their strengths and assets?

Remember that afterschool is for all. Programs can be just as fun — and important — for middle and high school youth as they are for younger children. Look for programs that meet children's needs, whether they are elementary school students, adolescents or teenagers.



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What Afterschool Should Offer

Elementary: Ages 5-10

Characteristics of This Age-Group:

High energy and need lots of activity
Practicing large muscle and fine motor skills
Developing physical flexibility
Growing attention span
Respond to simple rules and limits
Eager to learn
Creative
Beginning to reason
Feel their ideas count
Easily hurt and insulted
Identify with the family
Eager to please
Enjoy small groups
Emphasize fairness

What Afterschool Should Offer This Age-Group:

Wide variety of activities
Choices
Routine
Frequent individual interaction with adults
Games with simple rules
Quiet areas as well as noisy areas
Outside experiences
Imaginative play opportunities
Some clear responsibilities like clean-up
Projects that apply school day lessons about the family and community
Opportunities to read aloud, silently, and to talk about books and ideas
Matching, ordering and sorting activities
Opportunities to apply arithmetic problems in real-world ways
Small experiments with everyday products
Nature walks and talks
Opportunities to work with a variety of materials for projects
Physical activities that do not emphasize competition, such as jump rope, marbles, jacks and kites
Music, dance and drama opportunities
Opportunities to try experiences from diverse cultures

Preadolescents & Teens: Ages 10-14

Characteristics of This Age-Group:

High energy and need lots of activity
Like to achieve and be seen as competent
Seem inconsistent in ideas and moods
Use logic and reasoning
Think beyond the immediate experience
Can exchange ideas
Seek independence
Want voice in decisions
Feel awkward and embarrassed in some situations
Need praise and approval
Identify strongly with peers
Begin experimentation

What Afterschool Should Offer This Age-Group:

Wide variety of options
Lots of choice
Connections to real-world experience
Opportunities to interact in large and small groups
Individual recognition
Experiences that explore ethics and values with respected adults
Opportunities to serve others
Physical activity
Opportunities for decision-making and leadership
Opportunities to apply and reinforce school day lessons in group and individual performance and products
Experiences emphasizing reasoning and problemsolving in art, science, mathematics
Quiet times for homework with adult help and peer help when needed
Games that provide opportunities to practice basic skills, such as chess, checkers, puzzles, word games
Exposure to a wide range of reading activities with opportunities for discussion of the ideas found in the books
Experiences built on a wide diversity of cultures and ethnic groups

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Teens: Ages 14-18

Characteristics of This Age-Group:

Concerned about body and appearance
Highly developed motor skills
Worry about clumsiness, illness and diet
Think abstractly
Learn by doing
Less influenced by parents, more influenced by peers
Need and demand more freedom and privacy
Mask true feelings
Need praise and adult recognition
Admire heroes that demonstrate characteristics of friendship and romance
Recognize diversity of ideas

What Afterschool Should Offer This Age-Group:

Presentations that involve appearance and projects that involve physical heroes
Opportunities to discuss and address physical risk, including physical heroism, smoking, drugs, drinking, and sexual activity
Opportunities to tutor younger children
Opportunities to show competence in a public setting
Teamwork on projects in small and large groups as well as individually
Substantial choice with clear limits
Opportunities to express feelings through projects and activities
One-on-one opportunities to talk with adults
Loud and quiet areas and activities
Discussions of diverse ideas and opinions with adults and peers
Specific help with skill areas that are causing problems
Opportunities to catch up or move ahead with academic interests
Opportunities to work on school day projects and papers with library and Internet support
Problem-solving and reasoning skills practice

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Finding an Afterschool Program in Your Community

Our children deserve an opportunity to discover hidden talents and to expand their learning beyond the classroom.

To find an afterschool program:

1. Ask a teacher or principal at your local school if there is an afterschool program offered at school. If not, ask why. Tell them about the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program or to visit the Web site at www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/21stCCLC.

2. Try community organizations such as:

- YMCA: 1-888-333-YMCA, www.ymca.net
- Boys & Girls Clubs of America: 1-800-854-CLUB, www.bgca.org
- Girls Inc.: (212)509-2000, www.girlsinc.org
- Camp Fire Boys & Girls, www.campfire.org
- 4-H Council, www.fourhcouncil.edu
- Parks & Recreation Department
- Churches, synagogues and mosques
- Police Athletic Leagues

3. Talk to parents, guardians and grandparents about what their children and grandchildren do after school. They may be able to tell you about good programs in the area.

4. Call your local child care resource and referral office. They will have a directory of afterschool programs in your area.

Once you have located several afterschool programs, use the checklist below to evaluate and compare the programs.

Checklist: What to Look For in an Afterschool Program

- Does the staff make children feel welcome and comfortable? Do the children in the program seem happy, stimulated and well-supervised?
- Is the staff well-qualified to work with children? Does the staff share the languages and cultures of your community? Are there tutors and mentors?
- Are children engaged in learning activities through computers, art and dance, community service, or homework help?
- Do children have the opportunity to choose what they will do, how they will do it, and with whom?
- Do the program's indoor and outdoor spaces provide for a range of activities: homework help, physical games and sports, creative arts, eating and socializing?
- Are the activities well-suited to the age range of the children in the program?
- Do the activities stimulate children? Do they help them develop new skills, talents and goals?
- Are the facilities clean and in good shape?
- Is there enough staff that children have a chance to get one-on-one attention from adults?
- Does the staff have a system for knowing where the children are at all times?
- Do the program's hours of operation meet families' needs?
- Does the staff seem interested in your input and suggestions?
- Does the program encourage involvement from parents, community leaders, business leaders and others in the community?

If there is a fee for the program, do not be put off. Many offer financial assistance based on income and will work with you to ensure that *afterschool is affordable.*

Clubs, 4-H staff, Urban League, Cooperative Extension Service, labor organizations, arts organizations and museums, PTA, local chapter of NAACP and La Raza, local businesses, libraries, community centers, and local churches, synagogues and mosques. Ask each one if he/she could contribute ideas, time or money to help start an afterschool program in your community.

4. Call a meeting of the parents and other individuals who are interested in starting an afterschool program. Your list might include educators, local police, organizations that work with children, local businesses and elected officials.

- Use the information contained in this Kit as a basis of discussion. Talk about the benefits to the community and to families of a high-quality afterschool program.
- Assign people at the meeting to complete tasks such as:
  - assessing the community's afterschool needs and the resources that may be available to create afterschool programs that help meet those needs;
  - talking to elected officials about obtaining financial support for the program;
  - finding out how other communities got afterschool programs started;
  - talking with teachers about activities that might be offered in the program;
  - copying and distributing the Afterschool Action Kit to everyone interested; and
  - developing a fundraising plan.

5. Talk to Your Employer. Your employer may prove to be a great help in getting an afterschool program established in the community, or in supporting current programs. Employers benefit in several ways from such programs:

- Employees are better able to concentrate on their work when they know their children are safe and happy. Quality afterschool programs give employees peace of mind and eliminate the need to rush out of work early each day.
- Quality afterschool programs enable children to learn and develop both educationally and socially. This enrichment will make them better employees when they are adults.
- Becoming a partner in an afterschool program will demonstrate the employer's commitment to the community.

Getting Your Employer Involved in Afterschool:

- Ask your employer to donate a product or service to the program, or to allow employees to volunteer at the afterschool program once a week.
- See if your employer will get her/his business and/or civic associations involved in supporting afterschool programs.
- Ask him/her to visit the afterschool program and see what goes on. Perhaps your employer would like to talk to a group of children about what your company does.
- See if your employer would like to give a group of children from the afterschool program a tour of your business.

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Afterschool Resources

Many groups have developed tools that can help you develop an afterschool program and find funding. Most of this information is easily accessed through organizations' Web sites. If you do not have access to a computer, try your local library — most offer free Internet access.

National Center for Community Education (NCCE)
810-238-0463
www.nccenet.org
The National Center for Community Education promotes community education by providing leadership training to people who are interested in community schools and to those who are implementing community education.

National Community Education Association (NCEA)
703-359-8973
www.ncea.com
NCEA has developed a book of funding sources that support afterschool programs.

Children's Aid Society (CAS)
212-949-4800
www.childrensaidsociety.org
The Children's Aid Society creates programs for children that emphasize prevention and early intervention. The Society's Community Schools Technical Assistance Center helps communities across the country adapt their program model.

Communities In Schools (CIS)
1-800-CIS-4KIDS
www.cisnet.org
Communities In Schools champions the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people learn, stay in school and prepare for life.

Fight Crime! Invest in Kids
202-638-0690
www.fightcrime.org
Fight Crime! Invest in Kids is a national anti-crime organization led by more than 500 police chiefs, sheriffs, police association presidents, prosecutors, and survivors of violent crime.

The Finance Project (TFP)
202-628-4200
www.financeproject.org
The Finance Project has developed a series of technical assistance resources focused on financing and sustaining afterschool programs and community schools.

JCPenney AFTERSCHOOL THE "CAN DO" SOLUTION

The JCPenney Afterschool Initiative expands the world of affordable, quality afterschool programs so that millions of kids can reach their full potential. It is a partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, the YMCAs, and our public schools to raise awareness and provide direct support to afterschool programs. For more information, go to **www.jcpenney.net/company/cando**.

Your local community foundation

Call or go to your local library and ask for information on community foundations near you. Community foundations often support or create programs to benefit children in the area.

Web Site Resources

Benton Foundation Kids Campaign
www.kidscampaign.org
An information, knowledge and action center for adults who want to make their communities work for kids. Explore the pathway with information and resources on afterschool time.

C.S. Mott Foundation
www.mott.org
Web site for the C.S. Mott Foundation, a leading partner in the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative that supports local afterschool programs.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology National Library of Education, Department of Education
www.thegateway.org
A one-stop, any-stop access to high quality Internet lesson plans, curriculum units and other education resources. Browse subject and keyword lists, or search The Gateway. Retrieved records will link directly to the Internet resources they describe.

Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE)
www.ed.gov/free
Resources for teaching and learning from 30 federal agencies with search tools and a bulletin board for teachers and federal agencies to communicate about potential collaboration on new teaching and learning resources.

Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory
www.mcrel.org/programs/21stcentury
A useful compendium of Internet resources and examples of innovative afterschool programs compiled by one of the U.S. Department of Education-funded regional education laboratories.

National Institute for Out-of-School Time
www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC
Information about school-age child care from the National Institute for Out-of-School Time at Wellesley College (formerly the School-Age Child Care Project).

National Network for Child Care
www.nncc.org
Extensive database of publications and a listserv supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension Service.

National Performance Review
www.afterschool.ed.gov
A one-stop shopping Web site for parents, teachers, afterschool providers, and kids to learn about afterschool resources from many different government and non-profit agencies.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
www.nwrel.org/learns
LEARNS, a program of one of the U.S. Department of Education-funded regional education laboratories, features downloadable resources, innovative ideas for literacy practices and education-based national service projects.

Partnership for Family Involvement in Education
www.pfie.ed.gov
Information about the Partnership, including how to join, a list of members, examples of Partner activities and a comprehensive listing of U.S. Department of Education publications on family and community involvement including afterschool programs and other resources.

University of California at Irvine Afterschool Learning Programs
www.gse.uci.edu/afterschool/us
Staff training and program resource materials for local projects in California and beyond can be found on this Web site.

U.S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov
The latest information about national education issues, publications, education statistics and information about the different offices and programs at the U.S. Department of Education. Go to www.ed.gov/21stcclc to find out more about the Department of Education's afterschool program.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
www.hhs.gov
Find out about resources available through this federal agency on their Web site.

U.S. Department of Justice: Justice for Kids and Youth
www.usdoj.gov/kidspage
Information for children and youth on crime prevention, staying safe, volunteer and community service opportunities, and the criminal justice system.

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National Poll Data: Americans Support Afterschool

When you are talking to parents, community groups, teachers and principals, elected officials and employers about afterschool, it can be helpful to show them that almost every American supports afterschool. Remember that 9 out of 10 Americans — both parents and nonparents — think that afterschool programs should be available to all youth today.

- 91% of adults say it is important to them personally to ensure access to afterschool programs for children in their community.
- 90% of adults favor providing afterschool programs to children from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. daily.
- 86% of adults feel afterschool programs are a necessity for their communities.
- 85% of adults believe it is difficult for parents to find afterschool programs in their own communities.
- 71% of adults think that expanding quality afterschool programs is an issue that should be addressed by businesses in the community.
- 95% of adults surveyed say that afterschool programs help working families and build the social skills of children. 94% say afterschool programs help teach children how to resolve conflicts.

These findings are based on a nationwide poll — sponsored by the C.S. Mott Foundation and JCPenney — among 1,100 adults, 18 years of age or older, who are registered to vote, and includes an oversample of 100 parents of school-age children. The survey was conducted by Lake Snell Perry & Associates, Inc. and the Tarrance Group between July 27-29, 1999.

The Virtual Y

The Virtual Y is a school-based YMCA afterschool literacy program. The program is designed to improve students' reading and math skills and school attendance, as well as promote positive changes in behavior. The program supports children's education through student learning activities that include a reading club, math and strategy games, journal writing, drama, computer skills, environmental education and the YMCA's Youth and Government program. Values are developed by involving youth in discussions on respect, responsibility, honesty and caring. Health awareness is promoted through instructional sports, fitness and a monthly focus on substance abuse prevention.